A

SERMON

PREACH'D before the

QUEEN

AT

White-Hall, March 6. $169\frac{1}{2}$.

PSALM xlii. 6.

Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? and why art thou so disquieted in me?

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

JOHN Lord Bishop of *Norwich.*

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PSALM xlii. 6.

Why art thou cast down O my Soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?

A Man, in no part of his Life, wherein he is sensible he has offended God, can be exempted from the Duty of repenting presently; it being an obligation, which constantly lieth upon him, whenever he perceives his sin, to ask pardon for it, and to forsake it.

However, considering the multitude of business, and many diversions Men meet with in the ordinary course of Things that hinder them from repenting, as they ought to do, of their Sins; 'tis of absolute necessity that they should single out, and set apart several portions of their Time, wherein they may exactly consider their Spiritual Condition, severely judge their Actions, and narrowly search into the Occasions and Causes of their Errors and Failings, and endeavour to find the best means to prevent the same Crimes for the future.

A good part of that Season is now spent, which our Church hath appointed for a Review of our Lives, and to discover our Trespasses against the Divine Laws, that we might humble our Souls for them, and amend whatever we find amiss. And during this Season, you have heard the Nature of Repentance often and fully explain'd, and the most prevailing Reasons urged to excite your Care, and engage your Diligence in a matter of such infinite consequence to your Salvition; and I hope with good effect on the minds of many, who in secret have blessed God most heartily, for these Publick Occasions of Reforming themselves, and making their peace with him.

But notwithstanding these solemn Seasons are designed for the benefit of all Men, that the bad may be converted, tha

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the weak may be confirmed; and that those, who have made a large progress in the ways of Virtue, may still proceed to further degrees of perfection; yet it is manifest, that as hardned Sinners, who have little fear of God, and no regard of their Duty, do certainly grow worse by their contempt and neglect of these Opportunities; so also, that divers good Christians, but of timerous and melancholy Constitutions, do fear they do not become better, or recieve any improvement from them.

For they, feeling no present comfort from their long and strict Fasts, nor from their earnest and often-repeated Prayers, do conclude, That whatever they have been doing in the Service of God, is so mean and full of imperfections, that it will neither please him, nor profit their own Souls.

Wherefore at this time I shall not insist upon the Arguments which are proper to affect and awaken obdurate Offenders, but rather apply my self to the case of those melancholy Persons, who, notwithstanding they are in a safe condition, yet are in great need to have their minds quieted and composed. So that even they, who indeed most deserve it, may have their share of advantage, from such holy Seasons as these.

The scruples and fears which disturb them are manifold: I now can only have time to consider two or three of those Cases; which as more commonly, so more violently use to disorder and affright them; and shall give the most satisfactory answer to them that I can.

(1.) The first Case is of those who are apt to think, that the Reformation of their Lives hath not proceeded from a sincere love of God, and an unwillingness to displease him; but from a meer dread of those punishments which he hath threatned.

(2.) The second Case relates to them who find a flatness on their Minds, and want of Zeal, when they apply themselves to any Religious Duty; which makes them fear, that what they do, is so defective and unfit to be presented unto God, that he will not accept it; insomuch that this coldness, when they are imploy'd in their Devotions, doth lamentably deject them, and even tempt them to lay the practice of them aside.

(2.) The third Case doth concern those unhappy Persons, who have naughty, and sometimes blasphemous thoughts start up in their minds, while they are exercised in the Worship of God; which makes ready to charge themselves with the Sin against the Holy Ghost; to pronounce their Condition to be without hope of Remedy, and that God hath utterly cast them off.

(1.) I begin with those Persons, who are apt to think, that the Reformation of their Lives hath not proceeded from a sincere love of God, and an unwillingness to offend him; but from a meer dread of those Punishments, which he hath threatned to inflict on unrelenting Sinners. Their doubt is, that fear which hath had the greatest influence in reclaiming them from an ill Life, is but a slavish and sordid Passion, which God does despise, and that he will refuse all those Services, which do not spring from a nobler Principle: For seeing God is Love, he will not be pleased with any Sacrifice, but what is offered by Love.

I answer, That there can be no question, but Love is a more noble Principle of Action than Fear: And therefore, that the Religious Service which hath its rise from Love, is more Perfect, more Angelical, and more grateful to God: But for all that, he will not turn aside his face from those weaker and less improved Servants of his, whose Service and Obedience owe themselves chiefly to their Fears.

They who have forsaken their evil ways, out of a horrible dread that they would lead them to the Pit of Hell, will, it is to be hoped, find a place in the glorious Kingdom of Heaven. For Hell was made on purpose to terrifie daring Sinners, and to reduce and confine them within the bounds of their Duty.

The thing then I affirm is this; That they who have departed from their Iniquities, out of fear, that had they continued in them, they should have been condemned to dwell with everlasting Burnings, will at the Judgment of the Great Day be allowed to have been true Penitents, whom God will set on his Right Hand, and receive into the Bright Mansions of Infinite Happiness; which may be proved by the following Reasons.

(1.) Fear

(1.) Fear is one of the Paſſions God has planted in our Souls, as well as Love; they are both the Creatures of his Wiſdom and Power; and whatever he did put in us, was for ſome end, and may have a good uſe. Wherefore, when the Paſſion of Fear doth ſerve the End for which God grafted it in our Minds, there can be no doubt but he will approve the good Effects which it doth produce.

Now the end for which God placed Fear in our Nature, was cheifly to beget in us an awful regard of his moſt Glorious Majeſty; to make us dread violating of his Laws, and doing any thing contrary to his Righteous Will; and alſo when we trip or go aſtray from his Ways, to quicken our Returns to our Duty.

So that when Fear doth prevail upon a Man to amend his bad Life, he puts this paſſion to the very uſe for which he received it from God: and having thus applied it to the end for which it was made an Eſſential Ingredient of his Nature, we have no cauſe to queſtion but God will own him, and graciouſly allow his Obedience.

(2.) We may obſerve, That God hath enforced all the Laws he hath given to the Children of Men, by Threatnings, as well as by Promiſes; But as Promiſes are to work upon our Love, ſo Threats are to excite our Fears; God having made the Motives to our Obedience to anſwer the different Paſſions, with which he hath endued our Souls.

Wherefore there cannot be the leaſt reaſon to conceive, that God ſhould threaten Puniſhments againſt the Diſobedient, which naturally act upon the fears of Men, and yet not be pleaſed with the Service which theſe fears, raiſed by the Penalties annext to his own Laws, do bring forth. No, God therefore doth ſet Life and Death before Men, that the fear of Death may make them chuſe Life; and he threatneth them with Everlaſting Puniſhments, that the amazement and horrour, which the ſerious and due conſideration of them will cauſe in their Souls, may powerfully engage them with all ſpeed and care to labour to fit themſelves to partake of the Divine Mercies.

(3.) Our

(3.) Our Blessed Saviour first, and his Disciples after him in their Sermons, do address themselves not only to the Passion of Love, but also to that of Fear: which they never would have done, had they been conscious that the Sacrifices of Fear would not have ascended up to Heaven with a grateful savour.

He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Mar. 16. 16. Doth not Christ here intend to bring Men to a belief of his Gospel, and to yeild obedience to the Laws thereof, as well by the fears of Damnation, as the hopes of Salvation? And when he had cured the Man who had been afflicted with an Infirmity thirty eight Years, he bids him *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto him.* The Argument our Lord used to engage the poor impotent Man to live innocently, was directed to the passion of his Fear, taken from the danger of a Calamity, greater than the very long Infirmity of which he was now cured, that would befal him, if he did still continue in his sins.

Knowing the terror of the Lord, saith St. Paul, *we perswade Men.* The Apostle well knew, that the greatness of these Terrors, expresst in the foregoing Verse; *That we must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad*, 2. Cor. 5. 10. if fully and maturely weighed, would be of irresistible force to recover Men from a lewd and prophane Conversation. They must be brought to a state of extream obstinacy or desperation, upon whom an Argument of such worderful Power and Efficacy can make no impression.

(2.) I come to a second Case often complained of by some serious Christians, which is a want of inclination to holy things, and a coldness in their Devotions: They do not come to God's House, nor address themselves to their Prayers, with such an appetite as they do to the Business of the World; but want earnest and fervent Desires for the success of the Petitions they put up to their Father in Heaven; they cannot warmly ingage their Hearts in the Cause of their Salvation, but find a listlesness

listleſneſs to Spiritual Exerciſes; which they apprehend to be a full proof of their Hypocriſie, and that God will refuſe their Prayers and Thankſgivings, as vain and inſincere Oblations.

Now before I proceed in the beſt and cleareſt Method I can, to relieve Perſons in this unhappy Condition, I deſire it may be firſt obſerved, that why many have no more Zeal and Life in God's Service, is their own fault, for which they are greatly to be blamed.

Becauſe this dulneſs of Spirit that attends their Religious Exerciſes, does come from their own negligence, and want of conſideration. They take care to make an appearance in the Congregation, but no care about what their Souls are there employed. They have not conſidered of what infinite importance it will be to them to ſerve God in the moſt acceptable manner, nor how they ſhou'd render their Service acceptable; neither by what cauſe their Devotions have decay'd, nor by what means they may revive and increaſe them.

Now if they neither conſider where they are, nor for what end they came, it is no wonder that their Minds ſhould be flat and unactive all the time they ſtand before the Lord, and very little concern'd for the proſperous iſſue of the Prayers that are offered up by the Congregation.

As therefore it is high preſumption for ſuch careleſs Perſons to hope for any benefit by that part they bear in the Publick Worſhip; ſo they may cure their Malady, by retiring from their Buſineſs and their Pleaſures, and by reflecting in good earneſt upon the terrible dangers whereunto they do every hour expoſe their Immortal Souls.

But theſe are not the Men to whoſe Caſe I would ſpeak at this time; but I direct my Diſcouſe to thoſe who have frequently ſtriven to remove this coldneſs from their Souls, when they did approach the Heavenly Throne, and yet have failed in their attempt. Now, in abatement of their trouble, give me leave to lay the following Obſervations before them.

(1.) That the difference of degrees of affections, with which Men serve God, does often depend upon the difference of their Tempers and Constitutions. Some have such heavy Constitutions, that it must be a great matter that will work upon their hopes or fears; and it will require some time to make them very sensible either of their gain or loss.

But others have such a tenderness in their Natures, and such quickness of sence, that the least things do much affect them: A little prosperity makes all their Spirits to mount, and they are overflow'd with joy; and as small a cross sinks them down, and causes them to have sad and melancholy perswasions of their Condition.

Now People of such various Dispositions notwithstanding they have equally endeavour'd to prepare themselves, cannot serve God with equal affections: but yet he may be alike pleased with what they both do. Because he will measure their Obedience by the sincerity of their minds, that lies in their own power; and not by the difference of their Constitutions, which was not made by themselves.

The Constitutions of some Men being much warmer than those of others, they easier take fire, whether they are paying Homage to God, or doing business among Men. Where therefore Men have more heat in their natural Temper, it is no wonder they should have more zeal in their Devotions. But God will not reject any Man, because he is of a cold Complexion; or disdain his reasonable Sacrifice, because it is offered with less vehemence of Passion.

(2.) We may say further, That they who are not carried by their Passions to the Service of God, but render worship to him upon rational motives, because he is the giver of all good things seem to act upon a higher and more sublime Principle: For notwithstanding they are destitute of that pleasing warmth in their Passions, which provokes others to pray unto God, and to be thankful unto him; yet they do not cease to celebrate his Praise, because it is their duty to do it, and because Reason suggests that they ought to make grateful acknowledgments of his Infinite Mercies.

(3.) We

(3.) We may obſerve, That the moſt zealous are not always the beſt Men. For their zeal may be without knowledge, or on the wrong ſide; as it was in St. *Paul*, when he Perſecuted the Church. And it is his own obſervation, That notwithſtanding a Man had ſuch a zeal for the Cauſe of God, as would prompt him to ſuffer Martyrdom, and yet wanted Charity, his ſharpeſt Sufferings would profit him nothing.

I muſt confeſs, where a Man is zealouſly affected in a good matter, and his active Spirits are diſcreetly directed to the Service of God, ſuch an one may prove a glorious Inſtrument for the propagating and promoting the Fear and Honour of God among Men; and alſo may have a more ſenſible pleaſure in every Religious Performance. But all cannot raiſe their Affections to this pitch; however, *God will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed*; but pardon the wandrings, pity the weakneſſes, quicken the affections, and make gracious allowances for all the defects of infirm, but honeſt Chriſtians.

(4.) That the moſt holy Servants of God cannot maintain an equal warmth in their Devotions at all times. Experience doth teach them, that, in ſome Seaſons, an unaccountable heavineſs will ſeize upon their Hearts while they are on their bended Knees, ſupplicating the forgiveneſs of their ſins, who at other times can put their Souls all in a bright and pure flame, by intenſe meditations on the unſpeakable love of God.

If therefore now and then you perceive your minds dull and heavy at your Prayers, it is but what ſometimes doth happen to the moſt ſincere Chriſtians, how great care and diligence ſoever they uſe to uphold life and vigour in their Souls; ſo that this is no juſt-cauſe of diſquiet and dejection of Spirit. Moreover, Sickneſs Loſſes, and all Afflictions, do ſometimes ſo diſorder the Paſſions, and oppreſs the Spirits even of the beſt Men, that it is hardly poſſible they ſhould ſerve God with as much chearfulneſs under Calamities and Troubles as at other times; tho' they may have as much integrity, and as ſincere deſires to pleaſe him; and he will take

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what they then do, as kindly at their hands, and bountifully reward such Services.

Hence I gather, That since Men are not able at all times to keep their Affections at an equal height, when they address themselves to their Heavenly Father, either in the Church, or in their Closets, that he doth not expect it from them; and they ought not to give place to melancholy Fears, when they shall find it otherwise with themselves: God has made nothing the subject of our obedience, which is not within the bounds of our abilities; and he will at the Day of Judgment condemn Men for the Actions only, which proceeded from their Wills; and not for that want of heat in their Passions, which was owing to the natural make of their Constitutions, that they could not help; or to outward unhappy Circumstances, which they had not at their command.

(5.) What hath been hitherto said about coldness and damps in the Minds of Men while they are engaged in Religious Duty, has been to comfort those who are exceedingly grieved at it; and who yet have not been able to conquer it, tho' they have used true pains for that purpose. Now notwithstanding it is not to be expected, nor necessary, that these innocent Persons should meet with a compleat cure of their grief; yet I must tell them, that nothing will more enliven their Spirits in the Service of God, than deliberate Meditations of him, and of themselves, before they enter upon any part of Divine Worship.

If they would often engage their minds in Contemplations about the Divine Attributes, and the Infinite Perfections of the Nature of God, it would strangely help to deliver them from that drowsy Stupidity, of which they so sadly complain and which hath so strong an influence on their Actions. For frequent thoughts of Almighty Power, will make the most sturdy Temper to tremble, and the proudest Heart to submit. There is no thinking so seriously of unsearchable Wisdom, without being wrapt up in admiration of it, and becoming very willing to be ruled by it: And will not the meditations of Infinite Love, diffusing it self over the World, oblige us

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to adore, to honour, to love, and to praiſe that moſt Glorious Spring from whence it floweth.

Do but conſider, as the Providence of God watches over all the Works of the Creation, ſo with what a particular care it hath preſerved you, and deliver'd you from many and great dangers, which you did not foreſee, and againſt which you could make no Proviſion; and certainly it will give a ſenſible touch to your Soul, and cauſe you to break forth into Songs and Hymns of Thankſgiving.

But if you proceed ſtill further, to contemplate the deep Myſteries, and inconceivable love ſhewn by Chriſt in the mighty work of your Redemption, to conſider the great Condeſcenſion of your Saviour, when he left the Heavens to dwell amongſt us; the wonderful humiliation of himſelf, when he took our frail Mortal Nature upon him; the Pains, the Agonies, the Horrors of the moſt dreadful Death he ſuffered to ſave us ungrateful Sinners; this can hardly fail to diſſolve the moſt obdurate and ſtony Heart, and make you firmly conclude, that you can ſufficiently admire, love, ſerve or ſuffer too much for this moſt Bleſſed Saviour.

Can your Paſſions continue all puier, when you look to this your moſt merciful Redeemer, who left the Boſom of his Father to ſeek you, when you had loſt your ſelves in the ways of Sin, and the paths that lead to death! Who came to procure reconciliation for you with God, whom as you had heinouſly provoked, ſo you were in no reſpect able to make him ſatisfaction.

Do but with ſome ſeriouſneſs recollect how often the Lord hath ſpar'd you, when your own hearts have told you that you did deſerve Puniſhment; how very often you have highly offended him, and fearfully looked when he ſhould deſtroy you; and yet you are ſtill ſuffered to be in the Land of the Living, as ſo many Monuments of his Compaſſion; and he is not yet wearied with waiting for your return, that he may be gracious unto you: Do, I ſay, but meditate upon theſe mercies of your God, and try whether your Hearts will not all melt into Love and Affection.

Can we ſay too much, or think too long of this Saviour, who did joyn himſelf to our Fleſh, that he might looſe the bands of our Iniquity; who being in the Form of God took the Form of a Servant, that he might deſtroy the power of thoſe ſins, which would have enſlaved both our Souls and Bodies, and made us for ever miſerable?

Surely we cannot but fall down before the Lord, with the deepeſt reverence, and eſteem him above every thing in Heaven and Earth, who hath created us according to his own Image; who hath redeemed us with the Blood of his own Son, and who doth daily aſſiſt us with the Graces of his moſt holy Spirit, and who hath provided for us a Houſe not made with Hands, in the Heavens.

Let ſuch Subjects as theſe be the Arguments with which you entertain your Thoughts, before you begin any Religious Duty, and it will ſtrangely conduce to the filling of your Souls with Light and Life, and make you diligently ſtudy to obtain God's Favour, and breed in you moſt paſſionate Deſires to dwell in his preſence to all Eternity.

(3.) I come to the laſt Caſe I propoſed to ſpeak to, which doth relate

to those unhappy Persons, who have naughty, and sometimes Blasphemous Thoughts start in their Minds, while they are exercised in the Worship of God, which makes them ready to charge themselves with the Sin against the Holy Ghost, to pronounce their condition to be without hopes of remedy, and to fear that God hath utterly cast them off. Now to give them the best ease and relief I am able, I will endeavour these two things.

(1) To shew that their Case is not so dangerous as they take it to be.

(2) To give proper Advice for their Behaviour under these tumultuous Disorders of Mind, and for their recovery from them.

That their Case is not so dangerous as they apprehend it, I shall endeavour to shew by the following Considerations.

(1,) Because these frightful Thoughts do for the most part proceed from the disorder and indisposition of the Body. And this I take to be evident, because they are most rife, and troublesome, and insult most over a Man after a fit of Sickness, or a great Disappointment, or a heavy Loss; which hath depress his Spirits, and made them gross and heavy: but when it pleaseth God that he shall recover his health again, and his spirits grow finer, and move more briskly, and his strength doth become more confirmed, then these Perplexing thoughts use much to abate, and by degrees quite to vanish.

(2) Because they are many good People, who are exercised with them. For bad Men, whose Heads are busied in laying one Scene of Wickedness or other, how they may gratifie their Malice, or execute their Revenge, or over-reach their Neighbours, or violate their Trusts, or satisfie their beastly Lust, rarely know any thing of these kind of Thoughts, or use to complain of them. But they are honest and well-meaning Christians of unhealthy Constitutions, and melancholy Tempers, who are so miserably harrass'd with them; who above all things earnestly desire an interest in their God and Saviour, and for that reason the least dishonourable thought of him, which insinuates its self into their Minds, is so dreadful unto them.

(3) Because it is not in the power of those disconsolate Christians, whom these bad Thoughts so vex and torment, with all their endeavours to stifle and suppress them. Nay often the more they struggle with them, the more they encrease; and when they are vehemently opposed, they do more domineer and terrifie Men. And the true reason is, because by unsuccessful strivings they do but feed this melancholy Humour, and grow more dejected. So that there is good cause, as I observed, to judge them to be Distempers of the Body, rather than Faults of the Mind.

(4) We may observe, that they who labour under the burthen of such dismal Thoughts, are seldom betray'd into any great or deliberate Sin. For they having a very low opinion of the Condition of their Souls, are jealous of the least Temptations, and tremble at the appearance of any notorious Evil. Which is the cause they commonly set a strict guard over their Words and Actions.

Hence it is apparent that the sins which most easily captivate others,

can farce make an entrance into them. They have little Temptation to Covetouſneſs, who can find no ſatisfaction in Riches. They cannot be hard-hearted to their Neighbours in diſtreſs, who are ſo ready to beg the Prayers and Help of all about them. They are in no danger of being ſwelled with Pride, who think a great deal worſe of their own ſtate than it deſerves. They being then thus humbled into a mean apprehenſion of themſelves, by the calamitous diſorders of their Mind, do contend the more abundantly to keep themſelves blameleſs and unſpotted from the World, wherein they diſcovering no eaſe, no relief for their doleful Complaints, are not allured by any of its glittering or ſenſual Baits to tranſgreſs the Divine Laws.

From what has been ſaid it plainly follows, that there is more trouble than danger in the caſe of the dejected Chriſtians, which we have been conſidering. Altho' I own that none do more deſerve our pity, ſo black and diſmal is the Sentence they pronounce againſt themſelves; and yet I make no queſtion but God in his own ſeaſon, and when he ſees it moſt proper for them, will in ſome meaſure ſettle and quiet their Minds, and alſo beſtow a large Recompence on them for all the Troubles and Sorrows they have ſuſtained out of fear that he was highly diſpleaſed with them.

I am now arrived at the laſt Part of my Subject, which is to give the beſt Advice I can, for their Behaviour under theſe perplexing Diſorders of Mind, and for their Recovery from them. Which I ſhall endeavour in the following Particulars.

(1.) Frequently obſerve how your Thoughts are imployed. If they are engaged in a good Matter, encourage them to perſevere, and ſecure them, all you can, from outward diſturbance and diverſions. If they are taken up in trifling and vain Subjects, of no real benefit to you, tranſlate them to ſome more noble and uſeful Argument. For as your Thoughts are, ſo your Actions will be: Men cannot think fooliſhly and act wiſely. Beſides, idle Thoughts are Neigbours to bad ones, and there is a ſtraight and ſhort paſſage from one to the other.

But if they are exerciſed in any evil deſign, it highly behoves you to extinguiſh and ſuppreſs them; for if the Fountain be muddy, all the Streams muſt partake of its Impurity. And this Work you ought to take the firſt opportunity to do, and that with all your Might, not only becauſe it is of abſolute neceſſity to the Health and Peace, and Innocence of your Soul; but becauſe the Victory over them will be much eaſier at their firſt appearance, than after, by ſuffering them to dwell with you, you have given them ſome countenance and encouragement: and ſo that Conqueſt which would have coſt you but ſmall pains may become doubtful, where you are to contend with Thoughts, whoſe long ſtanding hath confirm'd and almoſt rooted them in your Nature.

Thus frequent Reviews taken of your Thoughts, will produce both Power and Skill to manage them wiſely, and may in good meaſure prevent or cure the Troubles complained of by theſe Melancholy Perſons.

(2.) Endeavour to keep all your Paſſions within due bounds, ſince Storms of Paſſion confound the Soul, and make way for evil Thoughts. And whatever was the firſt Cauſe of the Paſſion, it is apt before it goes off

to run them into those frightful Reflections, which they so much dread, and after the weakness and indisposition which a strong Passion leaves behind it, they will be less able to repel them. So that it is very bad for Splenetick Persons to give way to their Passions, which both bring their Distemper upon them, and unfit them to grapple with it.

Nay, they cannot safely give any scope to the most pleasing Passions; for they sometimes shall find as bad effects in the excesses of Joy, as of any of the sowre and churlish Passions, and be as greatly dejected after them.

It would be much for their advantage to bring themselves to an equal and steady temper, so as none of the Affairs of the World may make a deep impression upon them; to be mild and gentle in their Behaviour, to avoid all needless Contentions and Heats; to be ready to do good to every body; but never to do things seemingly hard, except where great necessity requires it. Neither to set their Hopes, nor their Fears too high; nor groundlessly to despair, where God has pronounced no Threats: nor fondly to presume, where he hath made no Promises.

(3:) Do not leave your Callings, nor forsake the Post wherein Providence hath placed you. As before it was my Advice not to set your Hearts too much on the World, nor to suffer your Passions to run vehemently after it; so now I exhort not to quit your Imployment, and utterly to forsake it, by reason of the trouble of your Mind: For no but sinful at all is as bad for you as too much; and there is always more Melancholy to be found in a Cloyster, than in the Market-place. As when a Man is too full of business he is ready to forget God, so when he is idle and destitute of all Employment, his Head is apt to become a Cage, not only of unruly, but unclean thoughts.

It will be therefore much to your detriment to hide your selves from your Friends, and to quit the Calling wherein you were exercised; in that People of dejected Tempers never fare worse than by themselves, and when they have nothing to do. For when they have neither Company nor Secular Affairs to take up their time, they will be musing perpetually upon the Objections they make against themselves, and their thoughts will all fix and centre upon the desperate Condition, wherein their disturbed Phancy hath placed their Souls. Whereas vertuous and cheerful Conversation, innocent Recreations, and moderate Business, will give a great Diversion to the Distemper, and much conduce to chase away these gloomy Apprehensions.

(4.) When you find these thoughts creeping upon you, be not mightily dejected, as if they were certain Tokens of your Reprobation; For so far as they depend upon the disposition of the Body, which for the most part they chiefly do, I take them, no more to be marks of the Divine Displeasure than Sickness, or Losses, or any other Calamity you may meet with in the World.

Neither violently struggle with them; since experience doth teach that they increase and swell by vehement opposition, but dissipate and waste away, and come to nothing when they are neglected, and we do not much concern our selves about them; for it is the Custom of the Mind of Man,

much oftener to think and reflect upon those things, which either delight or grieve him, than upon those which he judges are to be despised.

I know this would be no good Advice, did these Thoughts lye within our Power, and were the Products of our Choice, as all sins are: For then the sooner and the more vigorously we resist them, so much the better it will be for us; for at first sin is weak, and has little Interest in us, and Conscience is tender, and is made extream uneasie by any compliance with it; so that if we did bravely oppose it in the beginning of the Siege, the Victory would be most certain. But when in length of time sin hath got both strength and confidence, our very Nature must undergo a great change before it can be subdued. But now having proved that these bad thoughts do resist more from the weakness of the Body, than from the viciousness of the Mind, it is evidently apparent, that by another sort of treatment they must have a cure.

It is not therefore a furious Combat with Melancholy Thoughts, which will but weaken and sink the Body, and so make the Case worse, but a gentle Application of such comfortable things as restore the Strength, and recruit the languishing Spirits, that must quash and disperse these disorderly Tumults in the Head.

Whenever therefore these troublesome thoughts begin to stir, do not fall into any violent Passion, which will abate the Courage, and shatter the Resolutions of your Soul; but having first commended your miserable Case to the the tender care and compassions of your Heavenly Father, who will not let you be afflicted above measure, endeavour with a meek and sedate temper quietly to bear them.

(5.) Do not think the worse of God for them, or accuse his Providence of want of care of you. For he might have permitted such thoughts to have continued perpetually, or at least to have visited you much oftener and in a more frightful manner, and all this without the least diminution of his Justice But as his Mercy appears in the degrees and intervals of your Sufferings, so it does also in the ends of them. He sending these Afflictions for wise and kind Reasons; that that they might be powerful Preservatives of your Souls against the heinous sins of a crooked Generation in which you live, that cry loudly to Heaven for Vengeance; they might lessen your Inclinations to the Enjoyments of this Life; that they might deaden your Appetites to Sensual Pleasure, and take your Hearts off the perishing Goods of the World, which can afford you small Satisfaction so long as your Minds are haunted with these black thoughts.

Nothing will dispose you more to have compassion on your Suffering Brethren than your own Sorrows; and no thing make you less envy the towering height and prosperity of others, which to Persons in your mournful state must be so insipid and uncomfortable, that you will indeed be concern'd for the many dangers of their station; but never wish you could supplant them. In a word, nothing will cause you more to feel your own Infirmities, and a want of the Divine Assistance; nothing will oftener carry your thoughts to Heaven than your present Disconsolation and Trouble, whose length and acuteness will also make Heaven it self taste the sweeter, whenever God of his infinite Mercy, shall bring you thither.

(6.) Let not these afflicting Thoughts discourage you from the exercise of your Devotion; nor tempt you to omit, or negligently discharge any one Christian Office or Duty. Go still on in the ways of Religion, and do the work of the Lord, notwithstanding these Performances to your selves may seem flat, and heavy, and such as will neither be grateful to him, nor procure good to your Souls. Let your Prayers ascend up to Heaven continually, altho' as patient you find no Answer or Return to your Petitions. Is any among you afflicted, says St. James, let him pray. Prayer is the natu-

ful and the only safe Refuge for the Afflicted. It is a sure Key to the Heart, when nothing else in the World can support it: Nay, the Illiberal to Prayer, so grievous to weak Christians, will be removed by nothing so soon and so effectually, as by Prayer it self: For Prayer refines the Thoughts, purifies the Heart, and exalts the Soul above its natural pitch; so that he who did enter upon his Prayers with some coldness, shall often receive a wonderful joy in his Mind, before he comes to the end of them. Nothing will make the Soul partake so much of the Divine Nature, and so closely unite it to God as Devout Prayer.

But further, at these disconsolate Seasons especially, let the matter of your Prayers be such as doth imply your reposing an extraordinary confidence and trust in God, altho' he seems now to hide his face from you: for it will be a thing most acceptable to him, and a strong proof of your Integrity, that you cease not to do your Duty, even when you find little pleasure in it; and still continue to cast your self and cause wholly upon him, when he does appear to be afar off, and to have no regard to your Cries and your Tears.

And here it may be fit to give you a Caution against long Prayers; for your Head, under this disturbance, will bear nothing which requires length of attention: Let your Prayers therefore be frequent rather than long; such as may cause delight, and not prove tedious. There is no time or place, or imployment do so engage you, but you may have leisure now and then to send up your desires to Heaven, and if they be sincere and fervent, they will prevail with God, how short soever they are: for it is not the multitude of your words, but the honest disposition of your Heart, which will incline him to hear you. And this Advice is therefore to be insisted upon, because melancholy Christians have been observed to suffer by the length both of their Prayers and their Fasts.

Moreover, do not forsake the Table of the Lord, notwithstanding there also you meet no comfort, and should be altogether unable to move and affect your hearts with holy reflections upon the most cruel and shameful death of your blessed Saviour: For that Heavenly Bread will refresh your Souls, and encrease your Graces, and replenish your Hearts with joy, as soon as ever God shall find you qualify'd for so great Mercies.

What evil thoughts then soever are injected into your Minds, so long as you persist in a godly course of Life, there can be no colour of doubt but God will love you, and approve your Services. For he no where hath said, that Men shall be condemn'd for their ungovernable thoughts, over which they have no Dominion: But he hath promised, that all those who are not weary in well-doing, shall in due season reap everlasting life.

Now should these perplexing thoughts last as long as you live, which is the hardest thing you can suppose in this case; yet that (as I said before) would be no more an Argument of God's Anger, than a Fever, or a Fire, or the loss of a Friend, or any other Affliction, nor of the unsoundness and hypocrisie of your mind, who in this matter are only the Sufferer; for as you did not invite them, so they continue with you much against your content.

Let not therefore your present Trials and Humiliations make you despair of finding favour with a God of boundless Mercy, and most tender Compassions: Persevere in your Duty, and confide in his infinite Goodness, and at length the Clouds, which now darken your Minds, shall all vanish, and be succeeded by steady and pure light; your fears shall be turned into full assurances of unconceivable happiness; and all the Disorders, Tumults, and Confusions in your Souls, shall be changed into Eternal Peace, and undisturbed and endless Joys.

Give me leave to conclude all in the words of the Psalmist, who had been a Man of Sorrows from his youth, and yet ever received Supplies from the Lord answerable to his Distress. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him, for he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: Neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cryed unto him he heard. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy Heart. I will be glad and rejoyce in thy Mercy, for thou hast consider'd my trouble; Thou hast known my Soul in adversities. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me; yea, I will hope continually, and yet praise him more and more. O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee: O love the Lord all ye his Saints; for the Lord preserveth the faithful. They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee, for thou hast not forsaken them who seek thee.

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